

**Amendments to the Claims:**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) An exhaust emission control apparatus of an internal combustion engine in which combustion is continuously performed at a lean air/fuel ratio, the exhaust emission control apparatus comprising:

a NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst provided in a looped exhaust passage of the internal combustion engine for storing NO<sub>x</sub> contained in an exhaust gas at a lean air/fuel ratio flowing into the exhaust passage, and reducing the stored NO<sub>x</sub> in the presence of a reducing agent in the exhaust gas when the air/fuel ratio of the exhaust gas is lowered, a flow direction of the exhaust gas being reversed within the exhaust passage under predetermined conditions,

a reducing agent supply valve that is provided in the exhaust passage upstream of the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, through which the reducing agent is supplied to the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, and an exhaust state detector that detects a state of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, and

a controller that temporarily decreases the flow rate of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst while executes (1) a reducing agent supply control by temporarily decreasing the flow rate of the exhaust gas and supplying the reducing agent through from the reducing agent supply valve so as to execute and (2) a correction control of the flow rate of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst to correct a control parameter used in the reducing agent supply control in accordance with a value indicating a state of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, the value being variable upon supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve an exhaust state value that is obtained from an output of the exhaust state detector after the reducing agent has been supplied from the reducing agent supply valve.

2. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas~~ the exhaust state value comprises at least one of an oxygen concentration of the exhaust gas, a temperature of the exhaust gas, a NO<sub>x</sub> concentration of the exhaust gas, and a reducing agent concentration of the exhaust gas.

3. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~the controller controls the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve~~

~~such that the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas accords with a target value during the correction control, the controller compares the exhaust state value with a target exhaust state value and corrects the control parameter so as to bring the exhaust state value to the target exhaust state value.~~

4. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to ~~claim 1~~ claim 2, wherein ~~the controller controls the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve such that the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas becomes one of a maximum value and a minimum value~~ the target exhaust state value corresponds to at least one of a maximum value of the exhaust state value and a minimum value of the exhaust state value.

5. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein, ~~the controller controls the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve so as to accord~~ during the correction control, the controller determines a time period elapsing from a predetermined reference timing until the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas the exhaust state value reaches a peak upon after the supply of the reducing agent through from the reducing agent supply valve, with a target time period and corrects the control parameter such that the time period equals a target time period.

6. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein, ~~the controller controls a quantity of the reducing agent supplied through the reducing agent supply valve on the basis of the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas at one of a timing before and after the execution of the control of the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve~~ before or after the reducing agent supply control, the controller executes a reducing agent amount correction by supplying a target amount of the reducing agent from the reducing agent supply valve, and correcting a value of the target amount based on an output of the exhaust state sensor that is obtained after the target amount of the reducing agent has been supplied.

7. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~the controller serves to continuously change the flow rate of the exhaust gas from a timing when the flow rate of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst is decreased until restoration of the flow rate of the exhaust gas~~ the temporal decrease in the flow rate of the exhaust gas is accomplished by continuously changing the flow rate of the exhaust gas.

8. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein ~~the controller serves to decrease the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows into the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst so as to be temporarily held until the flow rate is restored~~the temporal decrease in the flow rate of the exhaust gas is accomplished by holding the flow rate of the exhaust gas at a particular rate.

9. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the controller controls a length of a time period ~~taken for the supply of~~ supply the reducing agent ~~through~~ from the reducing agent supply valve on the basis of the ~~value indicating the state of the exhaust gas~~exhaust state value.

10. (Currently Amended) An exhaust emission control method of an internal combustion engine in which combustion is continuously performed at a lean air/fuel ratio, and a NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst is provided in an exhaust passage of the internal combustion engine for storing NO<sub>x</sub> contained in a looped exhaust gas at a lean air/fuel ratio flowing into the exhaust passage, and reducing the stored NO<sub>x</sub> in the presence of a reducing agent in the exhaust gas when the air/fuel ratio of the exhaust gas is lowered, a flow direction of the exhaust gas being reversed within the exhaust passage under predetermined conditions, ~~and~~ a reducing agent supply valve is provided in the exhaust passage upstream of the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, through which the reducing agent is supplied to the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, and an exhaust state detector that detects a state of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, the exhaust emission control method comprising:

~~temporarily decreasing the flow rate of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst while~~executing (1) a reducing agent supply control by temporarily decreasing the flow rate of the exhaust gas and supplying the reducing agent through ~~from~~ from the reducing agent supply valve and (2) a correction so as to execute a control to correct a control parameter used in the reducing agent supply control of the flow rate of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst in accordance with an exhaust state value that is obtained from an output of the exhaust state detector after the reducing agent has been supplied from the reducing agent supply valve ~~a value indicating a state of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst, the value being variable upon supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve.~~

11. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control method according to claim 10, wherein at least one of an oxygen concentration of the exhaust gas, a temperature of the exhaust gas, a NO<sub>x</sub> concentration of the exhaust gas, and a reducing agent concentration of

the exhaust gas is detected as the exhaust state value~~value indicating the state of the exhaust gas.~~

12. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control method according to claim 10, wherein, during the correction control, the exhaust state value is compared with a target exhaust state value and the control parameter is corrected so as to bring the exhaust state value to the target exhaust state value~~the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve is controlled such that the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas accords with a target value.~~

13. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control method according to ~~claim 10~~ claim 11, wherein the target exhaust state value corresponds to at least one of a maximum value of the exhaust state value and a minimum value of the exhaust state value~~the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve is controlled such that the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas becomes one of a maximum value and a minimum value.~~

14. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control ~~apparatus~~ method according to claim 10, wherein, ~~the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve is controlled so as to accord~~during the correction control, a time period elapsing is determined from a predetermined reference timing until the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas value reaches a peak upon after the supply of the reducing agent through from the reducing agent supply valve with a target time period, and the control parameter is corrected such that the time period equals a target time period.

15. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control ~~method~~ apparatus according to claim 10, wherein, before or after the reducing agent supply control, a reducing agent amount correction is executed by supplying a target amount of the reducing agent from the reducing agent supply valve, and a value of the target amount is corrected based on an output of the exhaust state sensor that is obtained after the target amount of the reducing agent has been supplied~~a quantity of the reducing agent supplied through the reducing agent supply valve is controlled on the basis of the value indicating the state of the exhaust gas at one of a timing before and after the execution of the control of the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst upon the supply of the reducing agent through the reducing agent supply valve.~~

16. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control ~~method~~apparatus according to claim 10, wherein the temporal decrease in the flow rate of the exhaust gas is accomplished by continuously changing the flow rate of the exhaust gas~~the flow rate of the exhaust gas is continuously changed from a timing when the flow rate of the exhaust gas flowing through the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst is decreased until restoration of the flow rate of the exhaust gas.~~

17. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control ~~apparatus~~method according to claim 10, wherein the temporal decrease in the flow rate of the exhaust gas is accomplished by holding the flow rate of the exhaust gas at a particular rate~~the flow rate of the exhaust gas that flows into the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst is decreased so as to be temporarily held until the flow rate is restored.~~

18. (Currently Amended) The exhaust emission control ~~apparatus~~method according to claim 10, wherein a length of a time period taken for the supply of to supply the reducing agent ~~through~~from the reducing agent supply valve is controlled on the basis of the ~~value indicating the state of the exhaust gas~~exhaust value.